

Dear Senator Rahman, Representative Kavros DeGraw, and Honorable Members of the Planning & Development Committee:

My name is Sarah McCusker. I am the director of the Canton Public Library, the vice-president of the Connecticut Library Association, and a resident of Burlington. I am writing in support of House Bill 6800.

As library director, I manage a budget of more than \$640,000. The taxpayers of Canton have entrusted the library with these funds and one of my most important tasks is to make sure that those funds are spent responsibly. \$72,000 of that budget is dedicated to purchasing materials for all ages and in all the different media that our patrons demand – including downloadable books.

The current licensing system that libraries are forced to use does not allow us to develop comprehensive digital collections. Currently, ebooks for libraries are priced many times higher than their print counterparts.

As an example: One of the bestselling fiction books of 2021 was *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. In March of 2021, my library purchased two copies of the book: one hardcover, one digital. The print copy cost \$14.30 (discounted from the \$26.00 list price) and the digital copy cost \$55 for a two-year license.

	Price Paid	Circulations to date	Price per circulation
Print	\$14.30	48	\$0.30
Digital	\$55.00	24	\$2.30

That two-year license on the digital copy is expiring at the end of this month; we may get one more circulation out of it before it expires. After that, we will need to purchase another two-year license, for another \$55.00, should we wish to keep that book available for our patrons. In the meantime, the hardcover copy is still in good shape and has a lot of life left in it. Each subsequent checkout of that book will reduce its price per circulation further.

The demand for digital materials continues to grow, but it is difficult to justify the continued costs of maintaining an ebook collection when they are so much less cost-effective than print books. Our ability to provide our patrons – our taxpayers – with the materials that they want and need is compromised by these restrictive licensing terms.

To be clear: we are not opposed to publishers earning a profit, and we certainly want authors to receive fair compensation! But those earnings should not be made at, literally, taxpayer expense. Robust libraries are an integral part of the publishing ecosystem and giving us the ability to negotiate the terms of these licenses will benefit the entire industry.

I appreciate your interest in the issue of pricing and licensing terms for digital materials, and I hope we can make Connecticut a national leader in fair and equitable digital material pricing for libraries.

Sincerely,

Sarah McCusker